

**JUST AS YOU ARE DOING****1 Thessalonians 5**

**Intro:** This is my final talk in my BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP series, and there have been many times when you have thought, “I knew that!” or “ABC already does that!” of something along those lines. And it’s true. ABC knows how to build one another up and we put that knowledge in action. But we must not . . . *grow weary of doing good.* . . . Galatians 6:9a as we were reminded several weeks ago. It’s easy to grow lax and it can get old when we, by all appearances, are alone in our quest to do good and build others up. But, we have one another and we need to keep on keeping on just at you are doing.

In, what is probably the earliest of his letters, Paul needed to encourage the churches in the region around Thessalonica in Greece. They had been anticipating the return of Jesus Christ and it wasn’t happening. In chapter 4 of First Thessalonians he had been assuring the church that loved ones who had passed away would not miss out on the return of Christ because they would, in fact, be at the forefront when the trumpet of heaven announces the resurrection. He urges them to . . . *encourage one another with these words.* 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

He then continues that pep talk in our text, and so I’m going to use it to encourage us as well as, on this Sunday when I celebrate 18 years of ministry here at ABC, I preach my last message until September.

He begins with . . .

**Concerning the times: Don't be concerned**

- Let me read it to you. (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)
- When his disciples questioned Jesus about his return he replied to them, *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* Mark 13:32. And when they tried one more time to get a time frame out of him as he prepared to ascend to heaven, he replied just as firmly, *It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.* Acts 1:7. But it’s human nature to want to know the plan. So Pastor Paul had to answer the concerned questions of the Thessalonians. And Pastor Keith has to answer them too 2000 years later. People want to know. I have no scientific proof of this but I’d wager that when the question of what book of the Bible people would like to study is asked, 90% of those answering will say Revelation which they see as full of end-times information. Lots of preachers spend a lot of time predicting when the end will be when Jesus returns. But to me that’s a lot like a conversation with Grady might go. Like this one from the other day as we walked into my garage:

Grady: Is that your bike, Papa?

Me: Yep!

Grady: Why?

Me: Because Uncle Chuck sold it to me.

Grady: Why?

Me: Because he couldn’t ride it anymore.

Grady: Do you pedal it? (his legs are just now long enough to pedal his trike)

Me: Yep!

Grady: Why?

- Persisting with our obsession on when Jesus will return is as futile as a three year old’s questions. We. Just. Don’t. Know. And Paul has a response to the persistent concerns of his friends in Thessalonica. In the face of signs of the end times like wars and rumors of war and earthquakes and fires and storms and evil and even a peace that comes like the calm before a storm. And it’s a pretty simple:
- While you are waiting, never stop witnessing and always be ready. Wait and be alert. In a similar vein very similar to the full armor of God he wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul tells the Thessalonians *So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.
- We don’t know when Jesus will come back, so until he does, make the best of the time and tell as many people as you can about him. In verse 9 Paul shows how, as Christ Follower’s, we have escaped the wrath that comes from refusing the free gift of salvation. Let’s help other escape it too. That way, whether we will be still living or not when he returns, we are his and will enjoy eternal life.

- This is the good news that Christ Followers enjoy when they celebrate the life of a saint that has been well lived. The other day my friend Carlos Ortiz, who was a BIC pastor in Staten Island New York, died this past week, after a long illness. His wife, Leanora, posted this on Facebook, “*On Wednesday, June 21, at 6 PM, my love and husband, Carlos M. Ortiz entered into the fullness of life. We believe that this life on Earth is short, but eternity is everlasting. I will miss him terribly. We were together more than 45 years.*” I will miss him terribly – is the terrible reality for Leanora. But the even greater reality and hope for her and for all of us who loved him, the greater reality is that Carlos has entered into the fullness of life. I was so sad for Leanora but so happy for Carlos – who is now with Jesus for eternity.
- This is why Paul can tell his readers with great confidence to . . . *encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Yes! Encourage one another and build one another up. Make sure that all we do as Christ Followers and ABCers is to encourage one another and build one another up.
- And while you’re at it . . .

### **Love your leaders and be at peace among yourselves**

- Paul writes, *We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.* 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.
- You already do this. I know I am loved by you. I came here 18 years ago with a pretty good idea of what I was getting into. I knew I was going to be the shepherd of a wonderful congregation, but little did I know how much I would be shepherded right back. Thank you!!!!
- And thanks for being people of shalom. We live in a torn society that agrees on little and isn’t happy unless it’s unhappy. We come from different backgrounds and earning brackets, and we may have even supported different politicians over the years, but we have loved each other more because we are Followers of Jesus first and foremost. That makes us people of shalom. Please keep that up just as you have been doing – the world needs it.
- And all the while . . .

### **Admonish, encourage, rejoice, pray, and give thanks**

- That’s what Paul says here, *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18.
- It’s a continuation of the idea of being people of shalom. It’s a huge encouragement to be building one another up. I said a week or two ago that Christ Followers cannot be Lone Rangers. It’s not in the job description. We are by our very calling to be involved in one another’s lives – not as meddlers but as cheerleaders, coaches, protectors, and helper. One to another.
- And always rejoice. Steve Brown is a pastor and professor I have really appreciated over the years. Lately he has been writing and speaking about the idea of joy and lament. He caught me with this truth recently, “*If there is no laughter, Jesus has gone somewhere else. If there is no joy and freedom, it is not a church: it is simply a crowd of melancholy people basking in a religious neurosis. If there is no celebration, there is no real worship.*” And Charles Spurgeon, who preached an entire sermon on 1 Thessalonians 5:16 which has these two words, *Rejoice always.* Wrote, “*I am bound to mention among the curiosities of the churches, that I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice. . . Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy.*” I’m glad we are a laughing church ABC. It is so true that the joy of the Lord is our strength.
- And we are people of prayer. We have seen it work. We know it works and even when we don’t see what we want to see resulting from our prayer – we keep on praying. Because we know our God is faithful. More on that in a bit.
- We are a thankful people! We thank God for the little things and for the big things and for the good things and the bad things. Having an attitude of gratitude is contagious and – it’s the will of God for us.
- And, then Paul writes . . .

### **Do not quench the Spirit, but be careful**

- Here's how he says it, *Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. This is all part of being the church. This is what it means to build one another up and to be encouragers. David Guzik writes, *We can quench the fire of the Spirit by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others. When people start to draw attention to themselves, it is a sure quench to the Spirit.* We can also quench the Spirit by ignoring the truth that others are speaking into our lives. Even so, while we are to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit, we need to be careful that it truly is the Spirit – and then hold fast to what is good.
- And then my favorite blessing . . .

**The God who has set you apart is completely faithful**

- Listen, *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (ESV). And, of course, you need to hear it from The Message, *May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (The Message).
- This my prayer for you. Every day. A bit ago I said that we are a people of prayer so we keep on praying because we know our God is faithful. This is because we know our God and that he is the One who called us and he is completely dependable. We know, if he said it, he'll do it! Our God is faithful. He's faithful even when we are not faithful. But be faithful and rely on the one who makes you holy and whole. He has made us holy. He has set us apart – that is, he has reserved us for his purposes for his Kingdom. Count on him.
- And finally . . .

**Conclusion: Pray for us, and we will pray for you**

Paul's final words in this letter are for mutual edification. He is asking his readers to build him up even as he builds them up. Listen,

*Brothers, pray for us.*

*Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*

*I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28

Pray for one another ABC! A holy hug is just fine. Encourage one another with the power of God's word. Allow God's grace to flow into you, through you, and from you to one another. Continue to build one another up. Just as you have been doing. Amen.